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DIGITALISATION OF DEATH REGISTRATION WITH HOME AFFAIRS: A CASE STUDY OF SOUTH AFRICA'S EMERGING FUNERAL HOME SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

Accurate information on birth and mortality rates are essential for social and economic planning in both public and commercial sectors. Since the onset of COVID-19, the registration of deaths has been prioritised, with emerging undertakers designated a special queue at Home Affairs offices for this purpose. This paper aims to determine whether digitisation might alleviate the burden of death registration for emerging funeral providers. Semi-structured interviews were performed with a cohort of young funeral directors to establish a foundation for subsequent enquiries and formulate a theoretical framework. Data analysis was conducted using Microsoft Word, and the codes were subsequently exported into a table in Microsoft Excel with a bespoke macro. The research indicates that nascent funeral directors in South Africa have considerable obstacles stemming from insufficient governmental assistance, onerous registration procedures, antiquated systems, and racial discrimination. These obstacles impede their capacity to effectively register fatalities and expand their enterprises, adversely affecting their competitiveness and service quality. The study indicates that the ramifications of digitalisation are indeterminate, and it remains ambiguous if digitalisation constitutes progress in certain civilisations. The research advises, among other recommendations. The Department of Home Affairs should formulate and execute a comprehensive digital transformation strategy for the death registration process to enhance service delivery, client satisfaction, and overall efficiency and security.

1. INTRODUCTION

Historically, bereaved families were mandated to document their deaths collectively (Safa et al., 2024; Małecka, 2023). New funeral directors significantly contribute to the community's mourning process (Van Ryn et al., 2019; Aoun et al., 2019). Their services to the communities contribute to alleviating the impact of loss for families and communities (Burrell & Selman, 2022). These services enhance the social capital of communities (Komarnytskyi et al., 2024; Bi & Ploeger-Lyons, 2022). South Africa possesses numerous emerging funeral establishments with a limited number of large ones (Bhuda et al., 2023; Bank & Sharpley, 2020). Emerging undertakers additionally supply the social capital that large corporations are unable to offer (Van Ryn et al., 2019). This indicates that developing funeral directors experience deficiencies in their operations, including challenges related to compliance and the effectiveness of their systems. They become versatile in their ability to serve communities. In light of recent advancements in entrepreneurship, growing funeral directors have opted to incorporate death registration as a service, hence expediting the provision of their offerings. Following COVID-19, the registration of deaths has been prioritised, with developing undertakers designated a special queue at Home Affairs offices for this purpose (Bradshaw et al., 2022). To guarantee accurate statistics, entrepreneurial endeavours in the South African context must fit with the aims and strategic goals of the relevant government ministries, contingent upon the type of the activity. This study examines whether the digitisation of death registration could alleviate the challenge of distinct lineups in Home Affairs offices for registering deaths.

Van der Walt (2023) elucidates that digital governance fosters a nation's effective governance through heightened openness, improved service delivery, augmented public participation, enhanced efficiency, and superior data driven decision making. The World Health Organisation (WHO) (2013) asserts that decision makers and policymakers rely on accurate and prompt statistics for policymaking, program monitoring, and evaluation within a specific policy cycle framework. Maphela (2023) and Adanlawo (2017) assert that accurate information regarding the incidence and distribution of births and deaths are essential for social and economic planning in both public and private sectors. To guarantee accurate statistics, entrepreneurial endeavours in the South African context must fit with the objectives and strategic goals of relevant government ministries, contingent upon the nature of the activity.

The paper aims to determine if the burgeoning funeral industry may engage in the digitalisation of death registration as service providers. The project aims to determine whether digitalisation can alleviate the burden of death registration for emerging funeral providers. The paper aims to determine if the burgeoning funeral industry can engage in the digitalisation of death registration as funeral service providers. This exploratory study posits that the results of funeral directors will enhance their service offerings. This exploratory study posits that service offerings may be enhanced by empowering emerging enterprises through digitisation. While engaging with the digital realm as a nascent economy, it is expected that the investigative examination of new funeral directors regarding death registration by developing funeral service providers may pose a risk to civil sovereignty in the region.

To achieve the study aim, the following research questions are formulated

1. What are the procedures involved in the death registration process at the Department of Home Affairs?
2. What is the current status and accessibility of the death registration system for emerging funeral directors?
3. What challenges do emerging funeral directors face in navigating the death registration process with the Department of Home Affairs?
4. In what ways has technology contributed to the enhancement of the death registration process?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Digitalisation in Africa

Digitalisation has been adopted worldwide (Neves & Mead, 2021; Xaba et al., 2025). It serves as a catalyst for innovative, inclusive, and sustainable development. African countries have made substantial strides in expediting and prioritising effective digitalisation to harness its advantages. The African Union (AU) formulated a digital plan for Africa to facilitate the benefits of digitalisation for African nations while addressing any hazards associated with these advancements (Bello-Bravo et al., 2023). The AU 2020-2023 strategy aims to leverage digital technology and innovations to alter African societies and economies, enhance integration, foster inclusive growth, drive job creation, bridge digital divides, and eliminate poverty (Jamba & Marambi, 2024). The AU strategy seeks to facilitate the continent's socioeconomic advancement and guarantee Africa's autonomy over contemporary digital management instruments.

Chaka and Adanlawo (2024) assert that digitalisation optimises the data input process, reducing mistakes linked to manual record keeping and improving the precision of mortality statistics. The transition to

digitalisation is expected to resolve numerous persistent problems associated with death registration. In South Africa, the quantity of childbirths was markedly less than the quantity of child death certificates issued (Oyenubi & Kollamparambil, 2022). Consequently, the digitalisation of death registration was predicted to enhance data integrity and yield improved health outcomes through precise process monitoring. Furthermore, mortality statistics in South Africa revealed significant disparities in the completeness of registration between regions. The Western Cape, Gauteng, Northern Cape, Free State, and Northwest demonstrated comparatively high death registration rates, whilst provinces such as Limpopo, Eastern Cape, Kwa-Zulu Natal, and Mpumalanga experience lower levels of completeness.

This tendency was ascribed to multiple variables, such as delays in death reporting and the occurrence of unregistered births, which hindered the comprehensiveness of the mortality rates registry (Neves and Mead, 2021). Numerous child fatalities in South Africa transpire without the issuing of a death certificate, as families occasionally file the death at a later period, resulting in unrecorded fatalities. Zinyakatira (2007) asserts that the documentation of fatalities was more thorough than in prior years. However, the data revealed a discrepancy, with the quantity of death certificates surpassing the documented deaths in the population registries at certain intervals. This disparity was especially significant for persons without official identity numbers, which hindered formal statistical acknowledgement. The digitisation of the death registration procedure in the South African funeral home sector signifies an advancement in the recording and management of vital statistics (Rhoda et al., 2018). Historically, death registration has encountered several obstacles, including inadequate data collection and inconsistencies between the population register and the quantity of death certificates issued. Zinyakatira (2007) asserts that from 1996 to 2004, in Cape Town, the completeness of death registration varied between different years and provinces. This was concerning as it suggested an inadequacy in the death registration process. This pattern indicates geographical differences, with provinces like the Western Cape and Gauteng exhibiting comparatively high registration levels, in contrast to regions such as the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, which show lower registration rates.

2.2. The Role of the SA Department of Home Affairs in the Digitalisation of Death Registration

The digitalisation of death registration corresponds with South Africa's overarching objectives of modernising public services and enhancing transparency (Sant Fruchtman et al., 2024; Shibambu & Ngoepe, 2024). This aligns with the National Development Plan, which focusses on establishing a capable and digital economy (Maphela and Adanlawo, 2025; Paul et al., 2020). The Department of Home Affairs in South Africa is integral to the management and administration of vital statistics, encompassing death and registration. This function is crucial for the efficient running of the funeral home industry, which depends on precise and prompt death certificates to perform its duties. The collaboration between the funeral home sector and the government is essential for death registration, ensuring the accuracy and timeliness of all associated statistics.

An exemplary case of effective digitalisation is Geneva, where funeral establishments consistently relay information regarding registered deaths to a specific observatory office by daily faxes. This encompassed essential information, including the date and time of death, the name of the funeral home, date of birth, gender, address, and location of death (Shibambu and Ngoepe, 2024). The authors elucidate that this procedure enabled the health directorate to streamline the collecting of death statistics while augmenting the government's ability to oversee public health trends.

2.3. Digitalisation and the SA Funeral Home Sector

Funeral directors have a significant role in the deathcare sector, acting as managers and empathetic advisors to bereaved families (Van der Waldt, 2023). Their tasks are diverse, involving both the logistical elements of funeral services and addressing the emotional needs of clients. Funeral directors typically manage all aspects of funeral homes, encompassing financial oversight, property administration, and asset upkeep (Beard and Burger, 2020). Additionally, they market pre-need funeral arrangements, which enhance the sustainability of the funeral houses. They assist families in selecting caskets, urns, and various memorial products, as well as coordinating cemetery arrangements.

2.4. Collaboration between the Government and the Funeral Home Sector

The funeral home industry in South Africa is undergoing substantial upheaval as a result of the swift worldwide digital era, wherein novel methodologies are supplanting conventional procedures (Bank and Sharpley, 2020). A significant tendency emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic, characterised by the availability of virtual burials.

Limitations on gatherings required the adoption of online platforms for memorial ceremonies, enabling families to unite and commemorate their loved ones despite physical separation. Sant Fruchtman et al. (2024) elucidate that virtual platforms gained prominence, prompting funeral homes to incorporate technology into their services, so expanding accessibility and improving the overall experience for grieving families.

The significance of digitalisation in the funeral home industry is paramount (Nansen et al., 2017). It improves record keeping and communication with governmental entities. Family members in need of funeral services frequently encounter emotionally challenging circumstances, and an efficient registration process can mitigate some of the strain on grieving families. Digital platforms provide real time updates and immediate access to essential paperwork, hence minimising the time families invest in the death registration process (Rahman et al., 2025; Straw et al., 2024). The Department of Small Enterprise observed a history of sustainability difficulties for small firms, especially during their initial years of establishment. Kergroach (2021) identified that the digital lag in SMEs resulted from multiple variables and obstacles, including a deficiency in information and awareness, skills gaps, inadequate capital, and the absence of complementary assets such as organisational methods or digital technologies. The author discovered that smaller enterprises frequently encounter greater challenges in adjusting to evolving legal frameworks and managing digital oversight and privacy concerns. Despite the push for digitalisation in the SME sector, the characteristics of specific industries and the diversity of the ecosystem may impede necessary advancements in digitalisation.

2.5. Digital Public Services and Governance in Emerging Economies

Digital services, especially in developing countries such as South Africa, can improve social and economic conditions (Milakovich, 2021). Digital governance can substantially enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of governance. By automating and optimising internal operations, it enhances governmental processes while reducing costs and increasing productivity. It provides opportunities for organisations in developing countries to deploy and achieve significant productivity enhancements and advantages. Public administration reform has transitioned to Digital Era Governance (DEG), emphasising the reintegration of comprehensive services for citizens and implementing significant digital transformations in governmental administration (Adanlawo and Chaka, 2025).

Governments must prepare for the threats and challenges presented by this new paradigm of digital governance and the expansion of various technical solutions (Idzi and Gomes, 2022). Citizens establish expectations and require innovative governance strategies from governments due to these transformations and emerging opportunities. Digital governance involves transitioning services to new digital formats to allow governments to continuously collect extensive data on citizens' everyday activities, interactions, and transactions, which can be retrieved, evaluated, and utilised to inform service development. Simultaneously, it promotes citizen engagement in the coproduction and provision of these digital services. Notwithstanding its benefits, its adoption has been slow (Tassabehji et al., 2018).

Digital governance is still evolving and presents unprecedented challenges (Lin and Yaakop, 2024). The growth of government in the digital domain may require novel strategies and viewpoints towards citizen participation, together with innovative methods for co-producing and refining state services. A significant barrier to the advancement of e-government is the challenge of financing digital services. Practitioners must understand the specific environment of their work and define explicit project goals and objectives before to initiating any digital government program (Milakovich, 2021). To enhance governmental efficacy, a digital governance plan must address the issues of cyberspace activities due to the considerable growth of political and administrative spheres. This addresses innovative methodologies for privacy, control, and personal data management. Governments must establish effective strategies to combat misinformation, including false news.

The evolution of e-services has transformed government citizen interactions. By implementing various activities and an unprecedented approach to engaging with government entities, digital platforms for service provision have become a vital source of information for citizens (Nguyen et al., 2022). With technological advancements in the internet age and the shifting expectations of businesses and citizens, digital governance is transforming to include networked, transparent, and user centric governing frameworks. Despite progress, challenges such as institutional resistance, privacy difficulties, and the digital divide persist. Inequities in technological access hinder the effectiveness and fairness of services, while privacy and security issues are paramount in interactions with the government. Idzi

and Gomes (2022) assert that public expectations and ongoing technological breakthroughs will shape the future trajectory of digital government.

2.6. Possible Challenges with the Digitalisation of the Death Registration

Mpinga et al. (2013) indicate that minor discrepancies arise from various factors, including fatalities handled by smaller independent funeral homes that may not consistently report data or may submit erroneous entries. This required a deliberate, coordinated strategy for funeral homes to standardise data reporting, hence minimising discrepancies. Paul et al. (2020) also recognise incomplete or erroneous cause of death reporting as an additional difficulty in death registration. Consequently, medical practitioners may fail to document the underlying cause of death, resulting in insufficient precise information. Bank and Sharpley (2020) also discover that relatives misconstrue the causes of death. For instance, certain medical professionals may withhold information regarding specific causes, such as nosocomial infections, to avert legal repercussions from families.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework selected for this research was meticulously chosen to augment the narrative addressing social, technological, and institutional components. The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology has been adopted. The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology offers a comprehensive framework for analysing the elements that affect individuals' choices to accept and employ new technology (Adanlawo & Chaka, 2025; Mohd, 2024). This research seeks to clarify the relationship among user attitudes, societal influences, and organisational support in determining technology acceptance by incorporating insights from this framework. This method underscores the intricate interplay among personal convictions, social factors, and institutional support that ultimately propels technological adoption. This research aims to provide significant insights for enhancing technology integration across many contexts by comprehending these interactions.

Momani (2020) asserts that technology acceptance theories and models serve as frameworks for examining the knowledge and acceptance of new technologies; nevertheless, what was the application of the technology, and what would be the implications of its sustained use? The theory posits that ongoing usage, derived from acceptance, is contingent upon the user's pleasure with the system (Maphela & Adanlawo, 2025; Dwivedi et al., 2019). This idea asserts that acceptance and

satisfaction are interrelated, with both factors affecting the intention to continue using technology. This link indicates that user satisfaction with a technology correlates with increased acceptance and sustained usage over time. Thus, comprehending this dynamic might assist developers in formulating more efficient technologies that fulfil customer requirements and improve overall happiness.

The exploratory variables of acceptance and pleasure include prior experience and skills, determination, capabilities, and the efficacy of the technology. This theory posits that outcomes are contingent not just upon intention but also on behavioural control. Masikyan and Savvas (2023) asserted that comprehending the idea of acceptance within a community or organisation necessitates the development of essential constructs for forecasting behavioural intents and usage. The examination of Technology Acceptance Theory underscores the complex connection between user happiness and the successful adoption of technology.

By examining factors such as previous experience, proficiency, and personal abilities, we attain a more profound comprehension of the motivations behind users' adoption of new technology. The significance of intention and perceived behavioural control emphasises that acceptance involves not only availability but also users' perception of their capacity to incorporate these tools into their life. Masikyan and Savvas (2023) assert that the development of important constructs can markedly improve our capacity to forecast behavioural intents and usage patterns. Ultimately, acknowledging these dynamics enables a more customised approach to technology design that fulfils user requirements while enhancing pleasure and engagement.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This article adhered to exploratory research, commonly employed to examine novel research enquiries and establish a foundation for subsequent studies. The study gathered data to evaluate potential issues in the existing death registration process. It also evaluates whether digitalisation can enhance the death registration process from the developing funeral director's location. Semi-structured interviews were performed with a cohort of developing funeral directors to establish a foundation for subsequent enquiries and formulate a theoretical framework (Chaka and Adanlawo, 2023). Semi-structured interviews, in contrast to completely structured interviews, exhibit flexibility, enabling the researcher to pose relevant questions while allowing the respondent to express their ideas freely. Two provinces, Gauteng and Mpumalanga, were selected; a sample of 30 funeral directors was

obtained from these provinces. 21 in Gauteng and 9 in Mpumalanga. Due to Gauteng's larger size and greater concentration of funeral service businesses, there are consequently more samples.

The content analysis methodology was employed to examine the acquired data. Systematic coding in content analysis can produce subjective interpretations. Chaka and Adanlawo (2022) assert that content analysis is a method for examining qualitative data that identifies patterns in research outcomes. The inductive coding approach was employed to categorise the acquired data into groups. This led to the identification of recurring concepts and patterns, culminating in the formulation of themes. Understanding underlying meanings necessitates reading and comprehending the content. This strategy allows researchers to utilise charts and other visual aids to present structured findings. A coherent body of information is generated through an ordered perspective on the data. The review tool in Microsoft Word was utilised for data analysis, and the codes were subsequently converted into a table in Microsoft Excel using a bespoke macro.

4.1. Demographic Characteristics

The survey examines the demographic features of SMEs to yield insights that help enhance decision making, improve support services, and cultivate a more favourable climate for SME growth and development. The variables encompass location, size, legal structure, and years of expertise.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics.

Demographics	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Location	Gauteng	21	70
	Mpumalanga	9	30
Size of SME	Micro	27	90
	Small	3	10
Legal structure	Cooperative	1	4
	Partnership	4	14
	Private company	23	82
Years of experience	3 years – 5 years	10	33
	6 years – 10 years	20	67

4.1.1. Location

The fact that 70% of the SMEs are located in Gauteng while 30% are in Mpumalanga highlights the concentration of funeral service providers in certain regions. This can indicate higher demand or better business opportunities in these areas.

4.1.2. Size of SME

The high percentage (90%) of micro enterprises indicates that most funeral service providers are small businesses. This can mean they have limited resources and may struggle with scalability and operational efficiency. Understanding this helps in designing support programs that cater to the specific needs of small businesses, such as access to financing, training, and technology.

4.1.3. Legal Structure

The predominance of privately owned companies (82%) suggests that most funeral service providers are independently owned. This can influence their decision making processes and operational flexibility. It also means that they might face unique challenges related to governance, succession planning, and access to capital.

4.1.4. Years of Experience

The fact that above two thirds of the SMEs have 6 to 10 years of experience indicates a certain level of maturity in the industry. However, it also suggests that many businesses are still in the early to mid-stage of their lifecycle. This can mean they are still navigating growth challenges and might benefit from targeted support to help them scale and become more resilient.

The data on the demographic characteristics of funeral service providers in the survey provides several key insights that are crucial for developing targeted support programs, policies, and resources that can help SMEs overcome industry glitches and thrive in a competitive environment.

5. FINDINGS

5.1. Description of Death Registration Process with the Department of Home Affairs

This study objective sought to assess respondents' description of the death registration process within the Department of Home Affairs in SA. The following themes highlight the varying experiences of funeral service providers with the death registration process, reflecting both the challenges and improvements

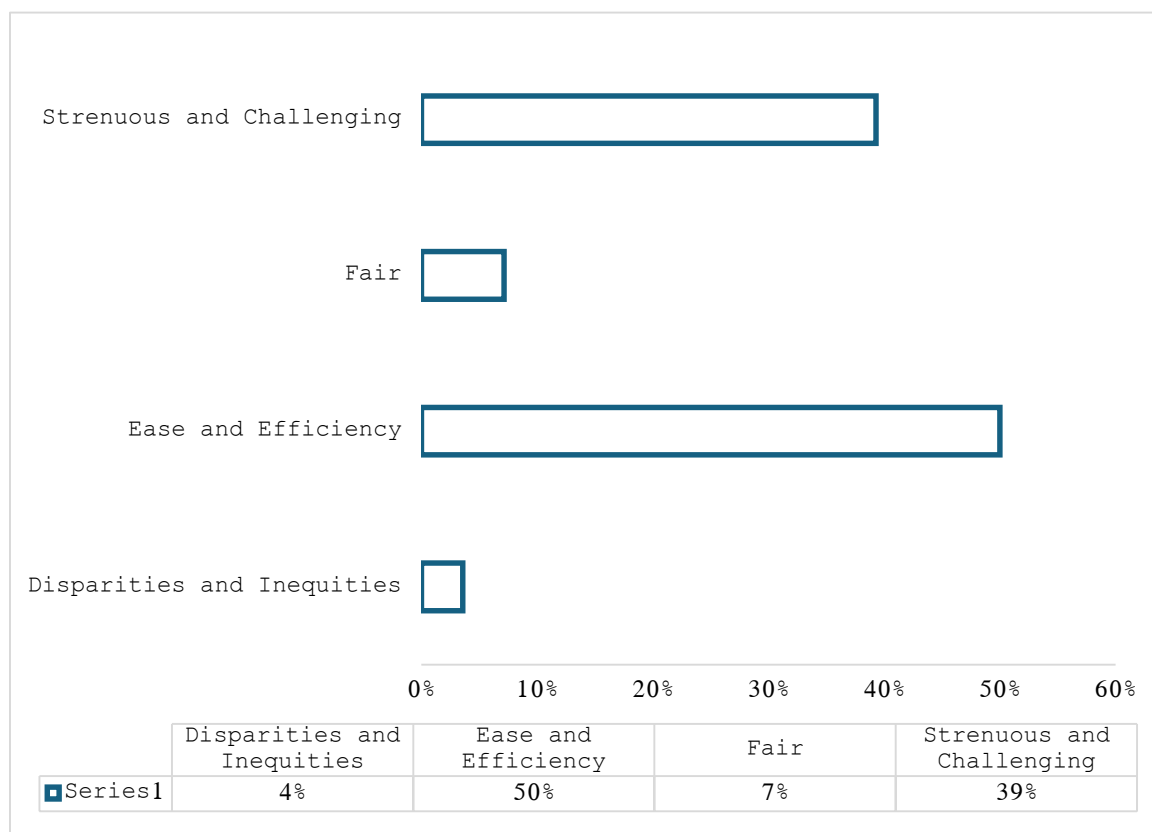observed in different areas and circumstances.

	Disparities and Inequities	Ease and Efficiency	Fair	Strenuous and Challenging
◼Series1	4%	50%	7%	39%

Figure 1: Respondents' Perceptions about Death Registration Process.

5.1.1. Ease and Efficiency

Half of the responses indicate that funeral service providers describe the death registration process as "**Easy and Efficient**" 50%. According to the respondents, death registration process is quite easy and reliable for those who have all the paperwork required. Ease and efficiency in the death registration process can be further improved by streamlining paperwork, enhancing digital access, and providing clear guidelines. **The responses from the qualitative data shared some engaging comments that**

"It's very perfect and they give us our own counter and we are happy." [Page 17, Line 28].

The insights further highlighted that

"I would say the process is improving daily as they are gradually going green." [Page 16, Line 12].

Strenuous and Challenging

On the other hand, some of the emerging themes highlight different opinion in terms of describing the death registration process with 39% describing it as "**Strenuous and Challenging**". **Some respondents shared sentiments that**

"It's bad in our area as we need to get a person with C.O.C to help us register." [Page 2, Lie 18].

According to the data analysed, the process involves extensive paperwork which can be time consuming and complex. Delays and inefficiencies often lead to prolonged waiting times. Therefore, this bureaucratic nature can be overwhelming, especially for funeral service providers needing to arrange services promptly.

5.1.2. Disparities and Inequalities

The results also established that the funeral service providers also have a strong conviction that there are some disparities and inequalities (4%) observed on the death registration process. Disparities and inequalities in death registration process include unequal access to resources and information which may result to longer wait times and more bureaucratic hurdles.

This has been noted in respondents' views, with some mentioning that

"It kills us because they request so much from us as black undertakers, while the whites don't get to be asked so many questions." [Page 9, Line 15]

5.2. The current state of death registration for emerging funeral directors

The following data shows the distribution of themes grouped according to common sentiments

and experiences regarding the current state of death registration for emerging funeral directors. These themes highlight the various challenges and experiences of emerging funeral directors with the current state of death registration, reflecting both the systemic issues and the need for improvements and support.
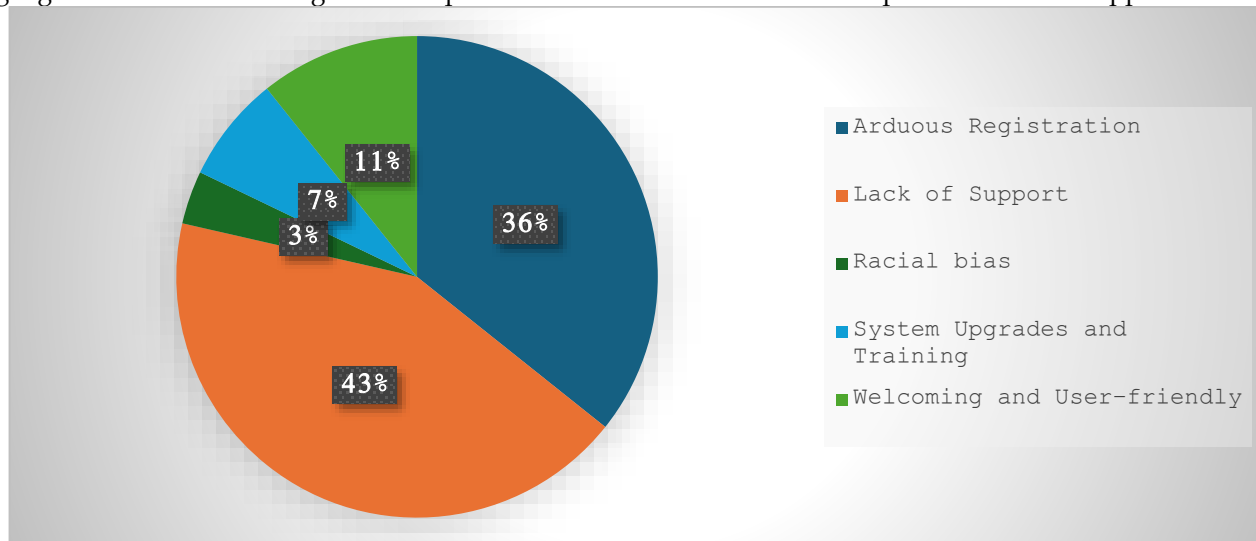

Figure 2: The Current State of Death Registration for Emerging Funeral Directors.

5.2.1. Lack of Support

Emerging funeral directors face significant challenges in the death registration process due to a lack of government support (43%).

"Very bad indeed. No opportunities given to upcoming funeral parlors." [Page 2, Line 22].

The findings indicate that these new entrants often struggle with bureaucratic hurdles which hampers their ability to efficiently register deaths. This lack of assistance and recognition as legitimate service providers further exacerbates their difficulties, making it hard for them to establish and grow their businesses.

5.2.2. Arduous Registration

The arduous registration (36%) process for emerging funeral directors in South Africa poses a significant barrier to operating efficiently, **as noted**

"Hey it's really difficult for us to register and the home affairs take long to address our concerns." [Page 35, Line 161].

The complex and time consuming requirements, including extensive paperwork and multiple verifications, delay their ability to provide timely services. This affects their ability to compete with established funeral service providers and effectively serve their communities.

5.2.3. System Upgrade and Training

The absence of system enhancements and training (7%) constitutes a considerable obstacle for aspiring funeral directors. Obsolete and unwieldy registration procedures, coupled with an absence of digital resources, hinder new entrants from efficiently navigating the system. They find it challenging to comprehend and adhere to intricate legal obligations without enough training, resulting in delays and inaccuracies. This deficiency in support impedes their capacity to initiate and expand enterprises, ultimately influencing their competitiveness and service quality within the funeral sector.

5.2.4. Racial Bias

The respondents also noted that racial bias (3%) further exacerbates the challenges faced by emerging black funeral directors in South Africa, **as noted**

"It's very bad because the requirements are so many and white don't undergo this." [Page 41, Line 1]

According to the findings, White funeral directors often receive preferential treatment, including quicker processing times and better access to resources and support. This disparity creates an uneven playing field, making it harder for black directors to establish and grow their businesses.

5.3. Challenges of Death Registration with the Department of Home Affairs

The collected data indicated that network instability has been a significant difficulty for funeral directors interacting with the Department of Home Affairs. They consistently indicate that the system is frequently inoperative or offline, resulting in considerable delays in the death registration process. This volatility hinders their capacity to submit essential documentation immediately, resulting in extended wait times and

inefficiencies. The dependence on an operational digital system implies that any interruption adversely affects their operations, hindering the provision of prompt services to bereaved families.

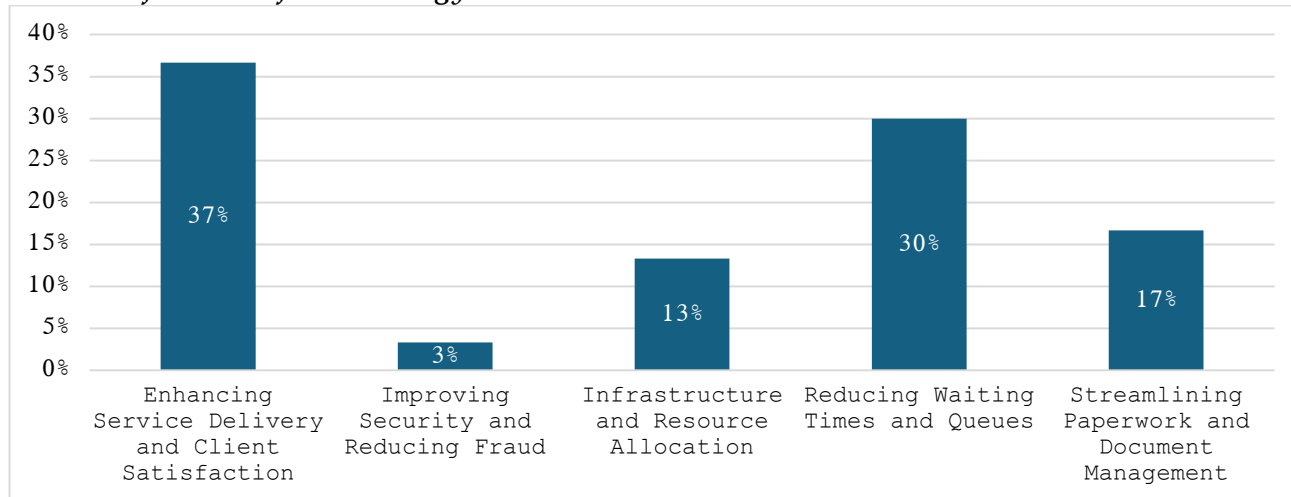## 5.4. The Influence of Technology on the

Improvement of the Death Registration Process

The following encapsulates the various ways in which technology improvement can enhance the death registration process.

Figure 3: Perceived influence of Technology on Death Registration Improvement.

5.5. Enhancing Service Delivery and Client Satisfaction

The findings of the survey established that respondents believe that incorporating technology into the death registration process can significantly influence service delivery and client satisfaction. This has been noted in several responses, **such as the following**

"Clients will get their documents in time and it will speedy the service delivery." [Page 3, Line 22]

Another one maintains that

"I think it will make things easy for us and the families to get paperwork quicker than before." [Page 18, Line 28]

In essence online portals and mobile applications can provide real time updates and notifications, keeping funeral directors and families informed about the status of registrations. In addition, automated systems can expedite verification processes, leading to faster turnaround times.

5.5.1. Reducing Waiting Times and Queues

Thirty percent of respondents firmly assert that integrating technology into the death registration procedure can significantly diminish waiting times and lines. This can be accomplished by permitting online document submission, so obviating the necessity for in person visits and the protracted wait times frequently encountered at Home Affairs offices. Moreover, online appointment scheduling can facilitate the efficient management and distribution of workload, thereby averting overcrowding and protracted lines.

"It could eliminate the crowding in the office and get more registration done at one go." [Page 13, Line 19]

5.5.2. Streamlining Paperwork and Document Management

Enhancing paperwork and document management (17%) via technology can significantly increase the efficiency of the death registration process. Digital platforms facilitate the electronic submission and storage of papers, hence diminishing the necessity for physical paperwork and mitigating the danger of lost or misplaced data. Electronic signatures and secure web portals can expedite approvals and diminish the many exchanges typically linked to traditional documentation. Furthermore, digital records facilitate organisation, retrieval, and updating, hence streamlining the management of substantial data volumes.

5.5.3. Infrastructure and Resource Allocation

Integrating technology into the death registration process helps efficiently address the issues arising from antiquated infrastructure and resource distribution. This methodology can assist the Department of Home Affairs in establishing a more efficient, accessible, and dependable death registration system. Upgrading outdated systems with sophisticated digital platforms assists funeral directors and families while also improving the overall efficiency and service provision of the Department of Home Affairs.

5.5.4. Improving Security and Reducing Fraud

Three percent of the replies suggested that utilizing

technological solutions for death registration might substantially improve the security of the procedure managed by the Department of Home Affairs. This would decrease the danger of fraud and enhance the overall trustworthiness and reliability of the system. **Participants indicated that**

"It would even reduce the fraud that some families do when applying for death certificate". [Page 11, Line 35].

6. CONCLUSION

The survey indicates that although certain funeral service providers perceive the death registration process as straightforward and efficient, a considerable number still characterise it as arduous and problematic, underscoring discrepancies and inequalities that require attention. New funeral directors in South Africa encounter considerable obstacles stemming from insufficient government assistance, cumbersome registration procedures, antiquated systems, and racial discrimination. These obstacles impede their capacity to effectively register fatalities and expand their enterprises, adversely affecting their competitiveness and service quality. Network instability aggravates these problems, resulting in delays and inefficiencies in the registration process. The poll underscores the considerable potential of integrating technology to improve service delivery and client happiness. This aligns with the thesis "The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology." Digital platforms, online portals, mobile applications, and automated systems can deliver real time updates, accelerate verification processes, and diminish waiting periods and queues. Utilising these technical tools enables organisations to optimise their operations, resulting in enhanced efficiency and an improved experience for clients. This alignment with the Unified Theory emphasises the significance of user approval in the adoption of innovations for improved service delivery. Optimising paperwork and document management via digital solutions can enhance efficiency and diminish the likelihood of lost or misplaced data.

The findings of this study align succinctly with the theoretical framework, "The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology," which advocates for the use of technology to enhance performance. The notion asserts that individuals must initially embrace technology; the gratification obtained from its use will result in sustained engagement with the technology. Consistent use of technology cultivates an environment in which individuals enhance their proficiency and creativity in their endeavours. This cyclical relationship demonstrates the importance of both implementing new technology and ensuring user satisfaction and support throughout their journey. Thus, comprehending this dynamic might assist developers in formulating more efficacious technologies that fulfil customer requirements and elevate general contentment. Ultimately, acknowledging these dynamics enables a more customised approach to technology design that fulfils user requirements while enhancing pleasure and engagement.

Furthermore, utilising technology can bolster security and mitigate fraud, hence augmenting the general trustworthiness and dependability of the death registration procedure. The study indicates that the ramifications of digitisation are indeterminate, and it remains ambiguous if digitalisation constitutes progress in certain civilisations. The use of digital technology into the death registration procedure signifies a substantial improvement that bolsters security and reduces fraud, hence cultivating increased confidence and trustworthiness among stakeholders. Although the advantages of digital transformation are apparent in numerous contexts, it is essential to acknowledge that the impacts of digitalisation can differ significantly, resulting in specific civilisations contending with ambiguity about their advancement. As we traverse this changing environment, it is imperative to confront these inequities and guarantee that all communities may fully leverage digital developments in important recordkeeping. Ultimately, adopting these changes with discernment will facilitate the establishment of a more open and efficient system that respects the dignity of each individual while mitigating any risks.

While the incorporation of technology into digital governance has significant promise for enhancing productivity and promoting social fairness, it also entails hazards that warrant careful consideration. Ultimately, digital governance can facilitate more accessible and inclusive governmental frameworks by optimising processes, enhancing public engagement, and augmenting service provision.

If not managed meticulously, it may exacerbate existing gaps, perhaps leading to a "digital divide" and marginalising individuals without access to technology or digital literacy.

6.1. Recommendations

- Standardize and streamline the death registration process to ensure consistency, reduce bureaucratic hurdles, and provide equal access to resources and information for all funeral service providers.
- Provide comprehensive support programs, streamline registration processes, and ensure equitable treatment for all funeral directors to foster a fair and competitive environment.
- Invest in robust, reliable network infrastructure to

minimize downtime and ensure seamless operation of the death registration system, improving service delivery for funeral directors and families.

- **Implement a Comprehensive Digital Transformation Strategy** The Department of Home Affairs should develop and implement a comprehensive digital transformation strategy for the death registration process in order to enhance service delivery and client satisfaction and improve the overall efficiency and security of the death registration process.

6.2. Study Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This research project examined the digitisation of death registration within the South African Home Affairs, utilising the burgeoning funeral home sector as a case study. The study sample is confined to South Africa; the results may be relevant outside its borders. Nonetheless, additional study is required to examine the applicability of these findings across various cultural and legal environments. An analysis of the ramifications of digitisation across diverse contexts can enhance our understanding of its influence on worldwide death registration processes. This project advances digital public services and governance in emerging economies by investigating creative methods to improve service delivery, accessibility, and citizen involvement. This study utilises technology to identify optimal practices and potential obstacles that might guide policymakers and practitioners in enhancing public sector efficiency and transparency.

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